

1831

**THE DEMON SHIP:**

THE PIRATE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN.

At the age of twenty-five, while a poor lieutenant serving in Ireland, I had the offer of a good military appointment in India, and yet I hesitated to accept it, because I knew in so doing I should be forced to tear myself from one, who, I felt, was far dearer to me than any thing the world held; and to whom I felt I was as dear. Margaret Cameron, the object of my passion, was the daughter of a retired Scotch officer, who dwelt in my native village. I had known and loved her from childhood, and when this gave place to womanhood, my affection changed in kind, while it strengthened in degree. I will not go over the ten thousand times trodden ground of lovers' explanations, and self reproaches, and betrothels, that passed between Margaret and myself—we parted solemnly plighted to each other. I was condemned, by the will of Captain Cameron, and by the necessity of obtaining some professional promotion, to spend a few years in India before I could receive the hand of his daughter.

I reached my Asiatic destination—long and anxiously looked for European letters—took up one day, by accident, an English paper, and there

read:—"Died at the house of Captain Cameron, in the village of A—, Miss Margaret Cameron, aged eighteen." I wrote in despair to Captain Cameron, informing him of the paragraph I had read, and imploring him for the love of mercy to contradict it. The Countess of Falcondale, a distant relation of my sole parent, my mother, who had been a continual drawback on all my early gratifications, and whose distinguished characteristic was the love of *management* and plotting, and bringing things about by her own exclusive agency, answered my letter, ratifying what I had heard, with the additional melancholy intelligence that my mother was no more. I will not here dwell upon my feelings.

The appearance of my name, about five years afterwards, among the "Marriages" in the Calcutta Gazette, was followed by successive announcements among the "Births and Deaths," in the same compendious record of life's changes. My wife perished of a malignant fever, and two infant children speedily followed her. I set out, to return over-land to my native country, a sober, steady, and partially grey-haired colonel of





thirty-six. My military career had been as brilliant as my domestic path had been clouded. The habitual complexion of my mind, however, was gravity—a gravity which extended itself to my countenance, and there assumed even a shade of melancholy. Yet I was a disappointed, not discontented man; and my character had, I trust, undergone some changes for the better. I arrived at a port in the Levant, and thence took ship for Malta, where I landed in safety.

At this period the Mediterranean traders were kept in a state of perpetual alarm by the celebrated "DEMON SHIP." Though distinguished by the same attractive title, she in nowise resembled the phantom terror of the African Cape. She was described as a powerful vessel, manned by a desperate flesh-and-blood crew, whose rapacity triumphed over all fear of danger, and whose cruelty forbade all hope of mercy. Yet, though she was neither "built" of air nor "manned" by demons, her feats had been so wonderful, that there was at length no other rational mode of accounting for them than by tracing them to supernatural, and consequently demoniacal, agency. She had sailed through fleets undiscovered; she had escaped from the fastest pursuers; she had overtaken the swiftest fugitives; she had appeared where she was not expected, and disappeared when even her very latitude and longitude seemed calculable. In short, it seemed as if ubiquity were an attribute of the Demon Ship. Her fearful title had been first given by those who dreaded to become her victims; but she seemed not ill pleased by the appalling epithet; and shortly, as if in audacious adoption of the name she had acquired, showed the word DEMON in flaming letters on her stern. To capture her seemed impossible; she ever mastered her equals, and eluded her superiors. Innumerable were the vessels that had left different ports in the Mediterranean to disappear for ever. It seemed the cruel practice of the Demon to sink her victims in their own vessels.

Most of the trading vessels then about to quit the port of Valetta, had requested, and obtained, convoy from a British frigate and sloop of war, bound to Gibraltar and thence to England. So eager were all passengers to sail under such protection, that I had some difficulty in obtaining a berth in any of the holes and corners of the various fine fast-sailing copper-bottomed brigs, whose cards offered such "excellent accommodations for passengers." At length I went on board the "Elizabeth Downs," a large three-masted British vessel, whose size made the surrounding brigs dwindle into insignificance, and whose fresh-painted sides seemed to foreshow the cleanliness and comfort that would be found within. One little hen-pen of a cabin on deck alone remained at the captain's disposal. However, I was fond of a cabin on deck, and paid half my passage-money to the civil little captain, who testified much regret that he could not offer me the "freedom of the quarter-deck" (such was his expression), as the whole stern end of the

vessel had been taken by an English lady of quality.

It was the month of June, and the weather, though clear, was oppressively hot, when we set sail, under all the canvas we could carry, without, however, making much progress. The Countess of Flowerdale, the name of my noble fellow-passenger, did not make her appearance on deck until towards the evening of the day we embarked. I was luxuriously stretched on a long seat which joined the steps of the quarter-deck when I heard her light foot as she ascended the cabin steps. I turned my eyes in the direction whence she came. Good heavens! what was my astonishment in seeing before me the form and features of Margaret Cameron! The scene and conversation that ensued I shall not here describe. It can easily be divined that Margaret had given her hand to save a parent, and that she had come abroad with a husband, who, dying, had left her a rich widow. If the limits of my little manuscript would allow, I could tell a long tale of well-managed treachery and deception; how that omnipresent Marplot of my adolescence, the Countess of Falcondale suffered me to remain in the belief that the death of Captain Cameron's niece, which occurred at A—, shortly after my departure, was that of my own Margaret; how in character of supreme manager of the affairs of the old officer, who had been struck with a paralysis, she kept my letters for her own exclusive eye; how she worked on Margaret's feelings to bring about a marriage with the Earl of Flowerdale, in the hope of acquiring a footing in his house, and the right of managing his domestic concerns; how Margaret held out stoutly until informed of my broken faith; and how her marriage was kept from the public press. In the accomplishment of all this baseness towards me, I feel assured there was something inexpressibly soothing in the sensations of the Countess of Falcondale, in thus overreaching and punishing one who had so often mortified her self-importance as I had done. Her's is not a singular character.

Day after day, as we lay on the becalmed waves, I renewed my intercourse with Margaret. As my intimacy with her increased, I reflected with additional pain on her marriage. In the first place, I could not bear to think of her having belonged to another; and, in the second, I felt that her rank and wealth might give to my addresses an air of self-interest which I felt they did not deserve. I dreaded the end of my voyage as much as I had at first desired it, and almost wished that we could sail for ever over those still, blue seas. Alas! it was not long ere I would have given all I held in life that Margaret and I had never met on those waves—ere I would have sacrificed all our late sweet intercourse, to have known that she was safe in her narrow house of turf by the lowly church of A—, and her soul in shelter from the horrors it was doomed to suffer.

One night, after we had been standing for some time contemplating the unrivalled blue of



a southern summer sky, I thought, as I bade the Countess a good night, that I perceived a light breeze arising. This I remarked to her, and she received the observation with a pleasure which found no corresponding emotion in my own bosom. As I descended to my berth, I fancied I descried among the sailors one Girod Jaqueminot, whose face I had not before remarked. He was a Frenchman, to whom I had, during my residence abroad, rendered some signal services, and who, though but a wild fellow, had sworn to me eternal gratitude. He skulked, however, behind his fellows, and did not now, it appeared, chose to recognise his benefactor.

I believe I slept profoundly that night. When I woke, there was a sound of dashing waves against the vessel, and a bustle of sailors' voices, and a blustering noise of wind among the sails and rigging; and I soon perceived that our ship was scudding before a stiff, nay, almost stormy gale. I peeped through the seaward opening of my little cabin. The scene was strangely changed. It was scarcely dawn. Dim and grey clouds obscured the heaven I had so recently gazed on. I looked for the white sails of our accompanying vessels, and our convoy. All had disappeared. We seemed alone on those leaden-coloured billows. At this moment I heard a voice in broken English say, "Confound—while I reef those tarred topsails my pipe go out."—"Light it again then at the binnacle, Monseer," said a sailor.—"Yes, and be hanged to de yard-arm by our coot captain for firing de sheep. Comment-faire? Sacre-bleu! I cannot even *tink* vidout my pipe. De tought! Monsieur in de leetle coop dere have always de lamp patent burning for hees lecture. He sleep now. I go enter gently—light my pipe." He crept into my cabin as he spoke. "How's this, my friend?" said I, speaking in French; "does not your captain know that we are out of sight of convoy?" Girod answered in his native language—"Oh! that I had seen you sooner. You think, perhaps, I have forgotten all I owe you? No—no—but 'tis too late now!" The man's face showed so much horror and anguish that I was startled. He pointed to the horizon. On its very verge one sail was yet visible. A faint rolling noise came over the water. "It is the British frigate," said Girod, "firing to us to put our ship about, and keep under convoy. But our captain has no intention of obeying the signal; and if you get out of sight of that one distant sail, you are lost."—"Think you, then, that the Demon Ship is in these seas?" said I, anxiously. Girod came close to me. With a countenance of remorse and despair which I can never forget, he grasped my arm, and held it towards heaven—"Look up to God!" he whispered; "*you are on board the Demon Ship!*" A step was heard near the cabin, and Girod was darting from it; but I held him by the sleeve. "For Heaven's sake, for miladi's sake, for your own sake," he whispered, "let not a look, a word, show that you are acquainted with this secret. If our captain knew I had betrayed it, we should at this moment be rolling

fathom-deep over one another in the ocean. All I can do is to try and gain time for you. But be prudent, or you are lost!" He precipitately quitted the cabin as he spoke, leaving me in doubt whether I were awake or dreaming. When I thought how long, and how fearlessly, the "Elizabeth" had lain amid the trading-vessels at Valletta, and how she had sailed from that port under a powerful convoy, I was almost tempted to believe that Girod had been practising a joke on me. As, however, I heard voices near, I determined to lie still, and gather what information I could. "What have you been doing there?" said a voice I had never heard before, and whose ruffianly tones could hardly be subdued by his efforts at a whisper. "My pipe go out," answered Girod Jaqueminot, "and I not an imprudent to light it at de beenacle. So I just hold it over de lamp of Monsieur, and he sleep, sleep, snore, snore all de while, and know noting. I have never seed one man dorme so profound."

I now heard the voices of the captain, Girod, and the ruffian in close and earnest parlance. The expletives that graced it shall be omitted. But what first confirmed my fears was the hearing our captain obsequiously address the ruffian-speaker as commander of the vessel, while the former received from his companion the familiar appellation of Jack. They were walking the deck, and their whispered speech only reached me as they from time to time approached my cabin, and was again lost as they receded. I thought, however, that Girod seemed, by stopping occasionally, as if in the vehemence of speech, to draw them, as much as possible, towards my cabin. I then listened with an intentness which made me almost fear to breathe. "But again I say, Jack," said the voice of the real captain, "what are we to do with these fine passengers of ours? I am sick of this stage-play work; and the men are tired, by this time, of being kept down in the hold. We shall have them mutiny if we stifle them much longer below. Look how that sail is sinking on the horizon. She can never come up with us now. There be eight good sacks in the forecastle, and we can spare them due ballast. That would do the job decently enough for our passengers—ha!" Here there was something jocose in the captain's tone. "Oh! mine goot captain, you are man of speeret," observed Jaqueminot; "but were it not wise to see dat sail no more, before we show dat we no vile merchanters, but men of de trade dat make de money by de valour."—"There is something in that," observed Jack; "if the convoy come up, and our passengers be missing, 'tis over with us. We can no longer pass for a trader; and to hoist the Demon colours, and turn to with frigate and sloop both, were to put rash odds against us."—"And de coot sacks wasted for noting," said Jaqueminot, with a cool ingenuity that contrasted curiously with his vehement and horror-stricken manner in my cabin. "Better to wait one day—two day—parbleu! tree day—than spoil our sport by de precipitation."—"I grudge the keep of these dainty passengers all



this while," said the captain, roughly; "my lady there, with her chickens, and her conserves and her pasties; and Mr. Mollyflower Colonel here, with his bottles of port and claret, and cups of chocolate and Mocha coffee. Paying, too, forsooth! with such princely airs for every thing, as if we held not his money in our own hands already. Hunted as we then were, 'twas no bad way of blinding governments, by passing for traders, and getting monied passengers on board: but it behoves us to think what's to be done now?"—"My opinion is," said Jack, "that as we have already put such violence on our habits, we keep up the farce another day or two until we get into clear seas again. That vessel, yonder, still keeps on the horizon, and she has good glasses on board."—"And the men?" asked the captain. "I had rather, without more debate, go into this hen-pen here, and down into the cabin below, and in a quiet way do for our passengers, than stand the chance of a mutiny among the crew." Here my very blood curdled in my veins. "Dat is goot, and like mine brave captain," said the Frenchman; "and yet Monsieur Jean say well too mosh danger kill at present; but why not have de crew *above* deck vidout making no attention to de voyagers. Dey take not no notice. Miladi tink but of moon, and stars, and book; and for de Colonel, it were almost pity to cut his throat in any case. He ver coot failow; like we chosen speerit. *Sacrebleu!* I knew him a boy." [I had never seen the fellow until I was on the wrong side of my thirtieth birth-day.]—"Alvays for de mischief—stealing apples, beating his schoolfellows, and oder little speerited tricks. At last he was expel de school. I say not, dis praise from no love to him; for he beat me one, two time, when I secretaire to his uncle; and den run off vid my *soodheart*—so I ver well pleased make him bad turn."—"Well, then, suppose the men come on deck, half at a time," said the captain; and we'll keep the prisoners—Heaven help us! the passengers—till the sea be clear, may be till sunset."—"Look, look!" said Jack, "the frigate gains on us; I partly see her hull, and the wind slackens." I now put my own glass, which was a remarkably good one, through my little window, and could distinctly see the sails and rigging and part of the hull of our late convoy. I could perceive that many of her crew were aloft; but the motion of our own vessel was so great that the frigate was sometimes on and sometimes off the glass; and I was therefore unable to discover whether she were hoisting or taking in sail. It was a comfortable sight, however, to see a friendly power apparently so near; and there was a feeling of hopeless desolation when, on removing the glass, the vessel, whose men I could almost have counted before, shrank to a dim, grey speck on the horizon. The captain uttered an infernal oath, and called aloud to his sailors, "Seamen—ahoy—ahoy! Make all the sail ye can. Veer out the main-sheet—top-sails unreefed—royals and sky-sails up" [ &c. &c. ] "Stretch every stitch of canvas. Keep her to the wind—keep

her to the wind!" I was surprised to find that our course was suddenly changed, as the vessel, which had previously driven before the breeze, was now evidently sailing with a side-wind.

The noise of rattling cables, the trampling of sailors' feet on deck, and the increased blustering of the wind in the crowded sails, now overcame every other sound. The Demon Ship was, of course, made for fast sailing, and she now drove onward at a rate that was almost incredible. She literally flew like a falcon over the waves. Once more I turned to the horizon. God of mercy! the frigate again began to sink upon the waters.

And now shall I waste words in telling what were my feelings during the hour of horror I have described? I felt as one who had dreamed himself in security, and awoke in the infernal regions. I felt that in a few hours I might not only be butchered in cold blood myself, but might see Margaret—that was the thought that unmanned me. I tried to think if any remedy yet remained, if aught lay in our power to avert our coming fate. Nothing offered itself. I felt that we were entirely in the power of the Demon buccaneers. I saw that all that Girod could do was to gain a few hours' delay. Oh! when we stand suddenly, but assuredly, on the verge of disembodied existence, who can paint that strange revulsion of feeling which takes place in the human bosom! I had never been one who held it a duty to conceal from any human being that approaching crisis of his destiny which will usher him before the tribunal of his Maker; and my earnest desire now was to inform Margaret as quickly as possible of her coming fate. But after Girod's parting injunction, I feared to precipitate the last fatal measures by any step that might seem taken with reference to them. I therefore lay still until morning was farther advanced. I then arose and left my cabin. It was yet scarcely broad day, but many a face I had not before seen met my eye, many a countenance, whose untameable expression of ferocity had doubtless been deemed, even by the ruffian commander himself, good reason for hitherto keeping them from observation. All on the quarter-deck was quiet. The skylight of the cabin was closed, and it seemed that the countess and her female attendants were still enjoying a calm and secure repose. I longed to descend and arouse them from a sleep which was soon to be followed by a deeper slumber; but the step would have been hazardous, and I therefore walked up and down the quarter-deck, sometimes anxiously watching for the removal of the sky-light, sometimes straining my vision on the horizon, and sometimes casting a furtive glance towards the evidently increasing crew on deck, whilst ever and anon my soul rose in prayer to its God, and spread its fearful cause before him.

I had now an opportunity of discovering the real nature of my sentiments towards Margaret. They stood the test which overthrows many a summer-day attachment. I felt that, standing as my soul now was on the verge of its everlast-



ing fate, it lost not one of its feelings of tenderness. They had assumed, indeed, a more sacred character, but they were not diminished. The sun arose, and the countess appeared on deck. I drew her to the stern of the vessel, so that her back was to the crew, and there divulged the fearful secret which so awfully concerned her. At first the woman only appeared in Margaret; her cheek was pale, her lips bloodless, and respiration seemed almost lost in terror and overpowering astonishment. She soon, however, gained comparative self-possession. "I must be alone for a few moments," she said. "Perhaps you will join me below in a brief hour." She enveloped her face in her shawl to hide its agitation from the crew, and hastily descended to her cabin. When I joined her at the time she had appointed, a heavenly calm had stolen over her countenance. She held out one hand to me, and pointing upwards with the other, said, "I have not implored in vain. Come and sit by me, my friend; our moments seem numbered on earth, but, oh! what an interminable existence stretches beyond it. In such a moment as this, how do we feel the necessity of some better stay than aught our own unprofitable lives can yield." Margaret's bible lay before her. It was open at the history of *His* sufferings on whom her soul relied. She summoned her maidens, and we all read and prayed together. Her attendants were two sisters, of less exalted mind than their mistress, but whose piety, trembling and lowly, was equally genuine. They sat locked in one another's arms, pale and weeping.

It was a difficult day to pass, urged by prudence, and the slender remain of hope, to appear with our wonted bearing before the crew. We felt, too, that there was a something suspicious in our remaining so long together, but we found it almost impossible to loose our grasp on each other's hands and separate. Too plain indications that our sentence was at length gone forth soon began to show themselves. Our scanty breakfast had been served early in the morning, with a savage carelessness of manner that ominously contrasted with the over-done attentions we had before received; and the non-appearance of any subsequent meal, though day waned apace, fearfully proved to us that the Demon captain now held further ceremony with his doomed passengers useless. Margaret held me to her with a gentle and trembling tenacity that rendered it difficult for me to leave her even for a moment; but I felt the duty of ascertaining whether any aid yet appeared in view, or whether Girod could effect aught for us. I walked towards evening round the quarter-deck—not a sail was to be seen on the horizon. I endeavoured to speak to Girod, but he seemed studiously and fearfully to avoid me. The captain was above, and the deck was thronged. I believe this desperate crew was composed of "all people, nations, and languages." Once only I met Girod's eye as he passed me quickly in assisting to hoist a sail. He looked me fixedly and significantly in the face. It was enough: that ex-

pressive regard said, "Your sentence has gone forth!" I instantly descended to the cabin, and my fellow-victims read in my countenance the extinction of hope. We now fastened the door, I primed my pistols, and placed them in my bosom, and clinging to one another we waited our fate. It was evident that the ship had been put about, and that we were sailing in a different direction; for the sun, which had before set over the bows of the vessel, now sent his parting rays into the stern windows. Margaret put her hand in mine with a gentle confidence, which our circumstances then warranted, and I held her close to me. She stretched out her other hand to her female attendants, who, clinging close together, each held a hand of their mistress. "Dear Edward!" said Margaret, grasping my arm. It was almost twelve years since I had heard these words from her lips; but it now seemed as if there were between us a mutual, though tacit, understanding of our feelings for each other. Unrestrained, at such a moment, by the presence of the domestics, Margaret and I used the most endearing expressions, and, like a dying husband and wife, bade solemn farewell to each other. We all then remained silent, our quick beating hearts raised in prayer, and our ears open to every sound that seemed to approach the cabin. Perhaps the uncertain nature of the death we were awaiting rendered its approach more fearful. The ocean must undoubtedly be our grave; but whether the wave, the cord, the pistol, or the dagger, would be the instrument of our destruction we knew not; whether something like mercy would be shown by our butchers in the promptness of our execution, or whether they might take a ruffianly pleasure in inflicting a lingering pain. Had Margaret or I been alone in these awful circumstances, I believe this thought would not have occupied us a moment, but to be doomed to be spectators of the butchery of those we love, makes the heart recoil in horror from the last crisis, even when it believes that the sword of the assassin will prove the key to the gate of heaven.

The sun sank in the waters, and the last tinge of crimson faded on the waves, that now rolled towards the stern windows in dun and dismal billows. The wind, as is often the case at sunset, died on the ocean. At this moment I heard the voice of the captain—"Up to the top of the mainmast, Jack, and see if there be any sail on the horizon." The group of victims in the cabin scarcely drew breath while waiting a reply which would decide their fate. We distinguished the sound of feet running up the shrouds. A few moments elapsed ere the answer was received. At length we heard a—"Well, Jack, well?"—which was followed by the springing of a man on deck, and the words, "Not a sail within fifty miles, I'll be sworn."—"Well, then, do the work below!" was the reply. "But (with an oath) don't let's have any squealing or squalling. Finish them quietly. And take all the trumpery out of the cabin, for we shall hold revel there to-night." A step now came softly down the cabin



stair, and a hand tried the door, but found it fastened. I quitted Margaret, and placed myself at the entrance of the cabin. "Whoever," said I, "attempts to come into this place does it at the peril of his life. I fire the instant the latch is raised."—A voice said, "Laissez moi entrer donc." I hesitated for a moment, and then unfastened the door. Girod entered, and locked it after him. He dragged in with him four strings, with heavy stones appended to them, and the same number of sacks. The females sank on the floor. In the twinkling of an eye Girod rolled up the carpet of the cabin, and took up the trap-door, which every traveller knows is to be found in the cabins of merchantmen. "In—in," he said in French to the countess and myself. I immediately descended, received Margaret into my arms, and was holding them out for the other females, when the trap-door was instantly closed and bolted, the carpet laid down, the cabin door unlocked, and Girod called out, "Here you, Harry, Jack, how call you yourselves, I've done for two of dem. I can't manage no more. Dat tanned Colonel, when I stuff him in de sack, he almost brake me arm." Heavy feet trampling over the cabin floor, with a sound of scuffling and struggling, were now heard over our head. A stifled shriek, which died into a deep groan, succeeded—then two heavy splashes into the water, with the bubbling noise of something sinking beneath the waves, and the fate of the two innocent sisters was decided. "Where's Monsieur Girod?" at length said a rough voice.—"Oh, he's gone above," was the reply; thinks himself too good to kill any but *quality*."—"No, no," answered the other, "I'm Girod's friend through to the back-bone—the funniest fellow of the crew. But he had a private quarrel against that captain down at the bottom of the sea there, so he asks our commander not to let any body lay hands on him but himself. A very natural thing to ask. There—close that locker, heave out the long table, there'll be old revel here to-night."—At this moment Girod again descended. "All hands aloft, ma lads," he cried, "make no attention to de carpet dere—matters not, for I most fairst descend, and give out de farine for pasty. We have no more cursed voyagers, so may make revel here to naight vidout no incommode." He soon descended with a light into our wooden dungeon.

Her own unexpected rescue, the fate of her domestics, and the sudden obscurity in which we were involved, had almost overpowered Margaret's senses, but they returned with the light. "Poor Katie, poor Mary. Alas! for their aged mother!" she said, in the low and subdued tone of one who seems half dreaming a melancholy and frightful dream, and looking with horror at Girod.—"I would have saved you all, had it been possible," said Jacqueminot, in French. "But how were all to be hid, and kept in this place? What I have done is at the risk of my life. But there is not a moment to be lost. I have the keeping of the stern-hold. Look you—here be two rows of meal-sacks fore and aft.

If you, miladi, can hide behind one, and you, colonel, behind the other, ye may have, in some sort, two little chambers to yourselves, after English fashion. Or if you prefer the same hiding-place, take it, in heaven's name, but lose not a moment."—"And what will be the end of all this?" asked I, after some hurried expressions of gratitude.—"God knoweth," he replied. "I will from time to time, when I descend to give out meal, and clean the place, bring you provisions. How long this can last—where we are going—and whether in the end I can rescue you, time must be the shower. If we should put into some port of the Levant, perhaps I may be able to pass you on shore in one of these sacks; but we are still on the Gibraltar side of Malta, and shall not see land for a month—only, for God's sake, keep quiet. I'd leave you a light, but it would be dangerous. I doubt you'll be stifled alive. Yet there's no help for it. Hide, hide—I dare stay not one moment longer." He rolled down a heap of biscuits, placed a pitcher of water by them, and departed.

Never will our first fearful night in that strange concealment be forgotten. The Demon crew held wild revelry over our head. Their fierce and iniquitous speech, their lawless songs, their awful and demoniac oaths, their wild intoxication, made Margaret thrill with a horror that half excited the wish to escape in death from the polluting vicinity of such infernal abominations. The hold was so shallow that we appeared close to the revellers. Their voices sounded so near that we seemed almost among them, and our concealment a miracle; while the heat became so stifling and unbearable, that we could scarcely gasp, and I began to fear that Margaret would expire in my arms.

It was a strange reflection that we might, almost without the warning of an instant, be in the hands of our brutal and unconscious jailors; for our concealment afforded not even the slender defence of an inside lock or bolt, and the carpet, which seemed to present a slight barrier between us and the Demon hoard, had been rolled up, as no longer necessary to give our late accommodations the peaceful appearance of a cabin fitted up for passengers. The light streamed here and there through a crevice in the trap-door, and I involuntarily trembled when I saw it fall on the white garment of Margaret, as if, even in that concealment, it might betray her. We dared scarcely whisper a word of encouragement or consolation to each other—dared scarcely breathe, or stir even a hand from the comfortless attitude in which we were placed. We could hear them speak occasionally of our murder, in a careless and incidental manner. The captain expressed his regret that we had not, as matters turned out, been earlier disposed of, and made a sort of rough apology to his shipmates for the inconvenience our prolonged existence must have occasioned them.

At length the revellers broke up. I listened attentively until I became convinced that no one occupied the cabin that night. I then ventured



gently to push up the trap-door a little, in order to give air to my exhausted companion. But the fumes that entered were any thing but reviving. All was dark and quiet as death, and I could hear the rain descending violently on the cabin sky-light. The wind was high and the ship rolled tremendously. We heard the roar of the waters against the side of our prison, and the heavy dashing on deck of huge billows, which even made their way down the cabin stairs.

Towards morning, as I supposed, for with us it was all one long night, I again distinguished voices in the cabin. "It blows a stiff gale," was the observation of Jack.—"So much the better," replied the hardy and ferocious voice of the captain; "the more way we make, the farther we get from all those cursed government vessels. I think we might now venture to fall on any merchantman that comes in our way. We must soon do something, for we have as yet made but a sorry bargain out of our present voyage. Let's see—four thousand pounds that belonged to the colonel there—rather to us—seeing we had taken them on board."—"Yes, yes, we have sacked the colonel," observed Jack, facetiously. His companion went on—"His watch, rings, and clothes; and two thousand dollars of the countess's, and her jewels, amounting, perhaps, to another two thousand. This might be a fine prize to a sixteen-gun brig of some dozing government, but the Demon was built for greater things."—"I suppose, captain," said Jack, "we go on our usual plan, eh? The specie to be distributed among the ship's company, and the jewels and personals to be appropriated, in a quiet way, by the officers? And for once, in a way, I hope there be no breach of discipline, Captain Vanderleer, in asking where might be deposited that secret casket, containing, you and I and one or two more know what? I mean that we took from the Spanish-American brig."—"It is in the stern-hold, beneath our feet at this moment," answered the captain.—"A good one for dividing its contents," said Jack. "I'll fetch a light in the twinkling of an eye."—"No need," replied the captain. "I warrant me I can lay my hand on it in the dark." Without the warning of another moment, the Demon commander was in our hold. On the removal of the trap-door a faint light streamed into our prison but it only fell on the part immediately under the ingress, and left the sides in obscurity. I suppose it was about four in the morning. I had laid Margaret down on some torn old signal flags, in that division of the hold which Girod had assigned her, and had myself retired behind my own bulwark of meal sacks, in order that my companion might possess, for her repose, something like the freedom of a small cabin to herself. I had scarcely time to glide round to the side of Margaret ere the merciless buccaneer descended. We almost inserted ourselves into the wooden walls of our hiding-place, and literally drew down the sacks upon us. The captain felt about the apartment with his hand, some-

times pushing it behind the sacks, and sometimes feeling under them. And now he passed his arms through those which aided our concealment. Gracious heaven! his hand discovered the countess's garments; he grasped them tight; he began to drag her forward; but at this moment his foot struck against the casket for which he was searching. He stooped to seize it, and, as his hold on Margaret slackened, I contrived to pass towards his hand a portion of the old flag-cloth, so as to impress him with the belief that it was the original object of his grasp. He dragged it forward, and let it go. But he had disturbed the compact adjustment of the sacks; and as the vessel was now rolling violently in a tempestuous sea, a terrible lurch laid prostrate our treacherous wall of defence, and we stood full exposed, without a barrier between ourselves and the ruffian commander of the Demon. To us it now seemed that all was lost, and I leaned over Margaret just to offer my own bosom as a slender and last defence.

The Demon captain had gone to the light to pass his casket through the trap-door. The sun was rising, and the crimson hues of dawn meeting no other object in the hold save the depraved and hardened countenance of our keeper, threw on its swart complexion such a ruddy glow, as—contrasted with the surrounding darkness—gave him the appearance of some foul demon, emerging from the abodes of the condemned, and bearing on his unhallowed countenance the reflection of the infernal fires he had quitted. That glow was, however, our salvation. The captain turned with an oath to replace the fallen sacks. Any body who has suddenly extinguished his candle, even on a bright, starry night, knows that the sudden transition from a greater to a lesser degree of light, produces, for a second or two, the effect of absolute darkness. And thus our concealment lay enveloped in utter darkness to our captain's eyes, dazzled by the morning's first flood of light. But it was difficult for the half-breathless beings, so entirely in his power, to realize this fact, when they saw him advancing towards them, his eye fixed on the spot where they stood, though he saw them not; it was difficult to *see*, and yet retain a conviction that we were not *seen*. The captain replaced the sacks instantly, and we felt half-doubtful, as he pushed them with violence against the beams where we stood, whether he had not actually discovered our persons, and taken this method of at once destroying them by bruises and suffocation. His work was, however, only accompanied by an imprecatory running comment on Girod's careless manner of stowage. We were now again buried in our concealment, but another danger awaited us. Jacqueminot descended to the cabin. An involuntary, though half-stifled shriek escaped him when he saw the trap-door open. He sprang into the hold, and when he beheld the captain, his ghastly smile of inquiry, for he spoke not, demanded if his ruin were sealed. "I have been seeing all your pretty work here, Monsieur," said the gruff captain, pointing to the



deranged sacks, behind which we were concealed. I caught a glimpse through them of Girod's despairing countenance. It was a fearful moment, for it seemed as if we were about to be involuntarily betrayed by our ally, at the very instant when we had escaped our enemy. Girod's teeth literally chattered, and he murmured something about French gallantry and honour; and the countess being a lady, and the Colonel Francillon an old acquaintance. "And so because you cut the throats of a couple of solan geese—as your duty was, at your captain's command—you think he must not see to the righting of his own stern-hold?" said the captain, with a gruff and abortive effort at pleasantry, for he felt Girod's importance in amusing and keeping in good humour his motley crew. Jacqueminot's answer showed that he was now *au fait*, and thus we had a fourth rescue from the very jaws of death.

Day after day passed away, and still we were the miserable, half-starved, half-suffocated, though unknown prisoners of this Demon gang, holding our lives, as it were, by a thread: hanging, with scarce the distance of a pace, between time and eternity, and counting every prolonged moment of our existence as a miracle. Girod at this period rarely dared to visit us. He came only when the business of the ship actually sent him. The cabin above was now occupied at night by the captain and some of his most depraved associates, so that small alleviation of our fears—small relaxation from our comfortless position—small occasion of addressing a few consolatory words to each other, was afforded us either by day or by night. At length I began to fear that Margaret would sink under the confined air, and the constant excitement. Her breath became short and difficult. The blood passed through her veins in feverish, yet feeble and intermittent pulsation. It was agony, indeed, to feel her convulsed frame, and hear her faintly-drawn and dying breath, and know that I could not carry her into the reviving breezes of heaven, nor afford a single alleviation of her suffering, without at once snapping that thread of life which was now wearing away by a slow and lingering death. At length her respiration began to partake of the loud and irrepressible character which is so often the precursor of dissolution. She deemed her hour drawing on, yet feebly essayed, for my sake, to stifle those last faint moans of expiring nature which might betray our concealment. I became sensible that the latter could not much longer remain a secret, and, with a strange calmness, made up my mind to the coming decisive hour. I supported Margaret's head, poured a faltering prayer into her dying ear, wiped the death-dews from her face, and essayed to whisper expressions of deep and unutterable affection. Happily for us there was such a tempest of wind and sea, as drowned in its wild warfare the expiring sighs of Margaret. At this moment Girod descended to the hold. He put his finger on his lips significantly, and then whispered in French—"Courage—Rescue!

There is a sail on our weather bow. She is yet in the offing. Our captain marks her not; but I have watched her some time with a glass, and if she be not a British sloop of war, my eyes and the glass are deceivers together." I grasped Margaret's hand. She faintly returned the pressure, but gently murmured "Too late." Ere the lapse of a moment it was evident that our possible deliverer was discovered by the Demon crew, for we could hear by the bustle of feet and voices that the ship was being put about; and the ferocious and determined voice of the buccaneer chief was heard, even above the roar of the tempest, giving prompt and fierce orders to urge on the Demon. Girod promised to bring us more news, and quitted us. The rush of air into the hold seemed to have revived Margaret, and my hopes began to rise. Yet it was too soon evident that the motion of the vessel was increased, and that the crew were straining every nerve to avoid our hoped-for deliverer. After a while, however, the stormy wind abated; the ship became steadier, and certainly made less way in the waves. A voice over our head said distinctly in French—"The sea is gone down, and the sloop makes signal to us to lay to." A quarter of an hour elapsed, and the voice again said, "The sloop chases us!" Oh! what inexpressibly anxious moments were those. I felt that aid must come, and come speedily, or it would arrive too late. We could discover from the varying cries on deck that the sloop sometimes gained on the Demon, while at others the pirate got fearful head of her pursuer. At length Girod descended to the hold. "The die is cast!" he said in his native language. "The sloop gains fast on us. We are about to clear the deck for action."—"God be praised," I ejaculated.—"Amen!" responded a faint and gentle voice.—"Do not praise Him too soon," said Girod, shrugging his shoulders; "our captain is preparing for a victory. The Demon has mastered her equals, ay, and her superiors; and this sloop is our inferior in size and numbers. The captain does not even care to come to an accommodation with her. He has hoisted the Demon flag, and restored her name to the stern."—"But has his motley crew," whispered I anxiously, "ever encountered a *British* foe of equal strength?"—"I cannot tell—I cannot tell; I have been in her but a short time, and will be out of her on the first occasion," said Girod, as he hastily quitted us. We now heard all the noise of preparation for an engagement. The furniture was removed from the cabin above us, and the cabin itself partially thrown open to the deck. Cannon were lashed and primed; concealed port-holes opened, and guns placed at them. Seeing ultimate escape impossible, the captain took in sail, and determined to give his vessel the advantage of awaiting the foe in an imposing state of preparation for action. He harangued his men in terms calculated to arouse their brute courage, and excite their cupidity. I confess I now almost began to tremble for the gallant little vessel, whose crew seemed thus bravely pressing on to their own destruction; I began to fear that



they would be powerless to rescue her in whose life my own seemed bound up. But what were my feelings when I heard the captain retire to that part of the vessel which had been the countess's cabin, and there take a solemn and secret oath of his principal shipmates, that they would, if they were boarded by a successful enemy, scuttle the *Demon*, and sink her, and her crew, and her captors, in one common grave. It appeared, then, that either the failure, or the success of the sloop, would alike seal our destruction.

Not a ray of light now penetrated through the chinks of the trap-door, and from the heavy weights which had fallen over it, I was inclined to think that shot, or even cannon-balls, had been placed over the mouth of our prison. We might, therefore, in vain attempt to show ourselves, or make our voices heard amid the din of war, should our allies (doomed to a watery tomb even in the midst of conquest) prove victorious. Yet condemned, as we seemed, alike by the fall or the triumph of our self-supposed murderers, there was something in the oath imposed by the captain which, as it showed a feeling of doubt as to the result, inspired me with hope. Besides, the noise of preparation for action had in it something inspiriting to my ear; and as it effectually drowned every other sound, I drew Margaret from behind the sacking into the most roomy part of our wooden dungeon; endeavoured, by fanning her with her kerchief, to create a little freshness of air around her; and spoke to her *aloud*, in the voice of hope and courage. It was a terrible thing, in such an anxious moment, to be unable to see or hear distinctly aught on which our fate depended. I listened anxiously for a signal of the sloop's nearing us. At length a ship-trumpet, at a distance, demanded, safe and unhurt, the persons of Colonel Francillon, the Countess of Flowerdale, and two female domestics. It was then evident that the pirate's stratagem at Malta had transpired. The *Demon's* trumpet made brief and audacious reply:—"Go seek them at the bottom of the sea." A broadside from the sloop answered this impudent injunction, and was followed by a compliment in kind from the *Demon*, evidently discharged from a greater number of guns. The volleys continued. Our vessel reeled to and fro, and sometimes half rose out of the water with the violence of the shocks she received. I heard her masts cracking, and her timbers flying in every direction. Yet still her men continued their yell of triumph, and her guns seemed to be served with as much spirit as ever. At length the firing on both sides appeared to slacken. One of the vessels was evidently approaching the other for the purpose of boarding. But *which* was the successful adventurer? My heart almost ceased to beat with intense expectation. The heavy grinding of the two ships against each other's sides was soon heard; and, not an instant after, the shouts of the sloop's crew rose triumphantly over our heads. Long and desperately raged the combat above us; but the pirates' yell waxed

fainter and fainter; while the victorious shouts of the British seamen, mixed with the frequent and fearful cry, "No quarter, no quarter to the robbers!" became each instant louder and more triumphant. At length every sound of opposition from the *Demon* crew seemed almost to cease. But there was still so much noise on deck, that I in vain essayed to make my voice heard;—and for the trap-door, it defied all my efforts—it was immovable. At this crisis, the ship, which had hitherto been springing and reeling with the fierce fire she had received from her adversary, and the motion of her own guns, suddenly began to *settle* into an awful and suspicious quiescence. But the victors were apparently too busy in the work of retribution to heed this strange and portentous change. I perceived, however, only too clearly that the *Demon* was about finally to settle for sinking. After the lapse of a few seconds, it seemed that the conquerors themselves became at last aware of the treacherous gulf that was preparing to receive them; and a hundred voices exclaimed, "To the sloop!—to the sloop! The ship is going down—the ruffians are sinking her!" I now literally called out until my voice became a hoarse scream. I struck violently against the top of our sinking dungeon. I pushed the trap-door with my whole force. All was in vain.—I heard the sailors rushing eagerly to their own vessel, and abandoning that of the pirates to destruction. I took Margaret's hand, and held it up towards heaven, as if it could better than my own plead there for us. All was silent. Not a sound was heard in the once fiercely manned *Demon*, save the rushing of the waters in at the holes where she had been scuttled by her desperate crew. It almost seemed that—determined not to survive her capture—she were eager to suck in the billows which would sink her to oblivion. At last, as if she had received her fill, she began to go down with a rapidity which seemed to send us, in an instant, many feet deeper beneath the waves, and I now expected every moment to hear them gather over the deck, and then overwhelm us for ever. I uttered a prayer, and clasped Margaret in my arms. But no voice, no sigh, proceeded from the companion of my grave. Her hand was cold, and her pulse quiet; and I deemed that the spirit had warred with, and overcome its last enemy, ere our common grave yawned to receive us.

Voices were heard; weights seemed to be removed from the trap-door! It was opened; and the words "Good Heaven! the fellow is right; they are here, sure enough!" met my almost incredulous ear. I beheld a British officer, a sailor or two, and Girod with his hands tied behind him. I held up my precious burthen, who was received into the arms of her compatriots, and then, like one in a dream, sprang from my long prison. Perhaps it might be well that Margaret's eye was half closed in death at that moment; for the deck of the sinking *Demon* offered no spectacle for woman's eye. There lay the mangled bodies of our late dreaded jailers, their fast-



stiffening countenances still retaining, in cold death itself, that expression of daring and brute ferocity which seemed effaceable only by the absolute decomposition of their hardened features. I shall never forget the scene of desolation presented by that deck, lying like a vast plank or raft of slaughtered bodies, almost level with the sea, whose waters dashed furiously over it, and then receding from their still ineffectual attempt to overwhelm the vessel, returned all dyed with crimson to the ocean; while the sun setting in a stormy and angry sky, threw his rays—for the last time—in lurid and fitful gleams on the ruined Demon.

A deep, and, as it seemed, long-pent sigh escaped from the bosom of Margaret when the fresh breath of heaven first played on her white cheek. I would have thanked her brave deliverers—have gazed on her to see if life still returned—but the sea was gaining fast on us, and I had lost the free use of my limbs by my lengthened and cramped confinement. To one human being, however, I did not forget my gratitude. As we hurriedly prepared to spring into the boat, I saw that Girod's pinioned members refused him the prompt aid necessary for effecting an escape in such a moment. I returned, seized a bloody cutlass that lay on deck, and, without leave of the officer, cut at once through the bonds which

confined our first deliverer.—“This man,” I said, as we seated ourselves, “has been the instrument of Heaven for our preservation. I will make myself answerable for his liberty and kind treatment.” Girod seized my hand, which received a passionate Gallic salute. Our sailors now rowed hard to avoid being drawn into the vortex of the sinking ship. Merciful God! we were then *out of the Demon!* I supported Margaret in my arms; and as I saw her bosom again heave, a renewed glow of hope rushed to my heart.

We had not been on board the sloop many minutes ere, slowly and awfully, the Demon sank to the same eternal grave to which she had so often doomed her victims. We saw the top of the main-mast, which had borne her fatal flag above the waters, tremble like a point on their very surface, and then vanish beneath them. A frightful chasm yawned for a moment—it was then closed by the meeting waves, which soon rolled peacefully over the vessel they had engulfed; and the Demon, so long the terror of the seas and the scourge of mariners, disappeared for ever.

In conclusion—I can only briefly say, that the sloop put into Naples, where the Countess was soon placed under a skilful physician, and subsequently became my wife.